To know the Shi'a

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The word Shi'a, to quote Ibn Manzur (1), means **"those people who love what the Prophet's Progeny loves, and they are loyal to such Progeny"**. Hameedullah Khan(2) states **"Shiat Ali means specifically that party which, after the death of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) attached itself to Hazrat Ali...considering him the successor of the Prophet (PBUH) both in temporal and religious matters".**

1. Lisan al-'Arab, by Ibn Manzur, vol. 8, p189
2. Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence, by Hameedullah Khan p121

The term Shi'a in fact derives its actual origin from the Qur'an, in which Allah (swt) calls Prophet Ibrahim (as) a Shi'a of Prophet Nuh(as) (1). In another verse Allah (swt) informs us of a fight between two men, one was a Shi'a of Prophet Musa (as) and the other was an enemy of Musa(as) (2).

***1.** The Holy Qur'an 37:83, **2.** The Holy Qur'an 28:15*

It is in praise of the Shi'a of Ali that Allah (swt) sent down the following revelation: **"Those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best of the creatures. Their reward from their Lord shall be everlasting gardens, below which flow rivers, they will abide there forever. Well pleased is God with them and they are well pleased with Him.** *[The Holy Qur'an 98:7]*

Numerous recognised Sunni scholars have in their commentaries recorded that following the descent of this verse the Prophet (s) declared: **"I swear by the one who controls my life that this man (Ali) and his Shi'a shall secure deliverance on the day of resurrection".** *[Tafsir Ibne Jarir, V 33 p 146, Cairo edition]*

We view Imam Ali as our guide, Hadhrath Abu Bakr does not come within this definition in his inaugural speech he indicated that he would be turning to others for guidance: **"Now then: O people, I have been put in charge of you, although I am not the best of you. Help me if I do well; rectify me if I do wrong"** *[Tarikh al-Tabari, English translation Volume 9 p 201]*

Compare these words to the challenge of Imam Ali (as) related by Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab who said: **"None of the Companions say, Ask me (about anything you like)! except for Ali".** *[History of the Khalifas by Suyuti, translated by Abdassamad Clarke, p178 (Taha Publishers)]*

How can we turn to others, when Allah (swt) says in His Glorious Book: **"On the Day when some faces will be bright and some faces will be black, And as for those whose faces will have turned black, it will be said 'What did you disbelieve after believing, taste the chastisement for your disbelief'. And as for those whose faces are white, they shall be in the Mercy of God, they shall abide therein forever".**

The Holy Qur'an 3:106-107

It is clear from this verse that the successful Party on the Day of Judgement will be those, whose faces are bright. Now apply this verse to the following hadith, taken from two recognised Sunni works: **"Three things have been revealed to me about Ali: That he is the Sayyid al Muslimeen (Chief of Muslims), Imam-ul-Muttaqeen (Imam of the Pious), and wa Qa'id ul Ghurrul Muhajj'ileen (Leader of the bright) face people on Yaum al Qiyamah".** *[Al Mustadrak, Hakim, p 137 & 138]*

So Ali (as) will be the leader of the bright face people, the bright face people will follow him i.e. they will be his Shi'a and it is this group which will attain Paradise. The Prophet (s) said in a Sahih hadith that Muslims would be divided into **73 sects** of which only **one** would attain paradise. It is for this sole reason that we connect ourselves with Ali (as). Our Sunni brothers ascribe to the view that **"Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not nominate his successor nor left any explicit an instruction on the question of selection or appointment of his successor".** *An introduction to Islamic State and Government, by Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, p 56, (Islamic Bk Publishers, Kuwait).*

We rely on an event that took following the completion of the Final Hajj when the Prophet (s) stopped at a place called Ghadhir Khumm, and addressed the companions **"Do I have more authority over you than you have over yourselves? To which the people said 'Yes'. He then said Of whomsoever I am Mawla Ali is his Mawla"** *[Musnad, by Ahmad bin Hanbal Vol 3 p116 Sader Printing 1969]* It is the issue of Imamate (Leadership) which is the key difference between the two schools, we however are yet to find a better explanation of the position of an Imam than that offered by Shah Isma'il Shaheed: **"The Imam is the Prophet's successor; the Imam has the same relations with Allah as the Prophet had with Allah. The Imam is the leader, in the same way the Prophet had the right to lead the people, the Imam also has the same rights over the people. We read in Surah Azhab 'The Prophet is awla (authority) to the believers', and the Prophet will be a witness to this fact on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet has rights over the people, as does the Imam, both in this world and the next, which is why the Prophet said 'Don't I have more authority over the people than they have over themselves, to which the people replied 'Yes'. The Prophet then said 'Of whomsoever I am Mawla, Ali is his Mawla'. This is why Allah says in the Qur'an that on the Day of Judgement you will be called according to your Imam (3:17), and why when Allah says 'And stop they are to be questioned' (37:24), we will be asked about the Wilayat (The Mastership) of Ali on the Day of Judgement"** *[Mansab-e-Imamat, by Shah Isma'il Shaheed, p 71 (A Famous Deobandi Scholar)]*